



NAVY SURGEON GENERAL OPENING REMARKS TO SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE — DEFENSE

Vice Adm. Forrest Faison, Navy surgeon general and chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery provided the following opening remarks to the Senate Appropriations Committee Defense subcommittee during a hearing on defense health programs and military medicine funding March 29.

Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Durbin, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to update you on Navy Medicine. We value your important oversight role and remain grateful for your support. Navy Medicine is a versatile, ready, agile and rapidly responsive medical force that directly supports the Navy and Marine Corps, America's premier maritime and expeditionary forces anywhere and everywhere they serve our nation. I can assure you that the men and women of Navy Medicine – 63,000 strong – are working hard to support that force and provide world-class care, anytime, anywhere.



Official U.S. Navy photo

My full statement provides you with a detailed update, but, in the interest of time, my opening remarks will focus on our most important priority – readiness.

We have no greater responsibility than sustaining readiness, now and in the future. On any given day, Navy Medicine personnel are forward deployed with the fleet, Fleet Marine Forces, special warfare units, the joint force, and at overseas commands, supporting a high operational tempo and meeting the demand

for contingency operations around the world. Just as importantly, shipmates are supporting the Navy-Marine Corps team in a variety of ways, including delivering care in our state-side and overseas hospitals and clinics, continuously honing their clinical and operational skills and training to provide life-saving and health sustaining capabilities when deployed to the operational platforms to which they are assigned.

These responsibilities set us apart from the civilian health care sector. We remain one of the few nations that maintain a sizable, ready-to-immediately-surge standing medical force to both support operational contingencies and rapid disaster response, helping to preserve America's strategic influence in key regions of the world and strengthening relationships with our partners and allies.

In sustaining our readiness capabilities for the next conflict, new approaches to training, preparation, equipment and support required by our operational and deployed medical personnel will be critical to realizing high combat survivability as we witnessed during the most recent conflicts. These considerations are important as we move forward.

Skill sustainment of our medical personnel is paramount. I have previously articulated the important role of our military treatment facilities in ensuring our personnel have the vital skills and clinical competencies needed to save lives on the battlefield. These military commands are our training and surge platforms where we prepare and then rapidly surge medical forces when needed. They provide peacetime health care as one of several ways to preserve their clinical skills, but that is not their primary purpose. They are readiness and force projection platforms. Combined and integrated within Navy Medicine's readiness commands and structure, our personnel gain both clinical competencies and develop required military skills in these commands and are prepared to rapidly surge when required.

One of the primary reasons for the high combat survivability rate we have realized is heroic work by our hospital corpsmen, the Navy's largest enlisted rating. You, and the American public, can be justifiably proud of their tremendous contributions. Corpsmen are responsible for delivering initial care on the battlefield or in an isolated assignment aboard a ship or submarine far from any MTF. To this end, we are changing and improving the training of our corpsmen at HM "A" school in San Antonio. Our curriculum changes are focused on providing ready and relevant training that will prepare them to manage the continuum of care in high threat or complex environments most likely to be encountered by our sea-based expeditionary Navy and Marine Corps forces.

We are also continuing to leverage our private and academic partnerships in key areas such as trauma training at LA county and University of Southern California where we've trained over 3,100 personnel, as well as the trauma and burn program at the Federal Health Care Center in North Chicago in partnership with the Cook County Health and Hospital Systems.

Our readiness focus is also evident in our commitment to global health engagement. As I speak to you this morning, Navy Medicine personnel are deployed in support of Continuing Promise 2017, a civic humanitarian mission in the Caribbean, Central and South America, where they are working with host nation counterparts and delivering medical services. Likewise, their shipmates concluded a similar mission in September, Pacific Partnership 2016, a major multilateral disaster relief preparedness mission in the Indo-Asia Pacific area of operation. These efforts are complemented by the innovative work in our research and development labs around the world where we are addressing critical military relevant research priorities – including malaria vaccine development – to protect our forces now and in the future.

All Navy Medicine commands – MTFs, education and training, research and development, public health, logistics – are focused on protecting the health of Sailors, Marines and families and preparing for our next deployment.

In closing, America's Sailors and Marines are the most highly trained, educated and specialized force in our nation's history – and each is essential to the mission. The demand to keep them healthy, ready, and on the job has never been greater. At the same time, they must be confident that their family members will be well cared for when they are deployed. We in Navy Medicine have no greater calling than to ensure we are doing all we can to provide the best care our nation can offer and do all in our power to, one day, return home alive, safe, and well, those who have volunteered to defend our freedom.

We are grateful for your support and the confidence you place in us. I look forward to your questions.